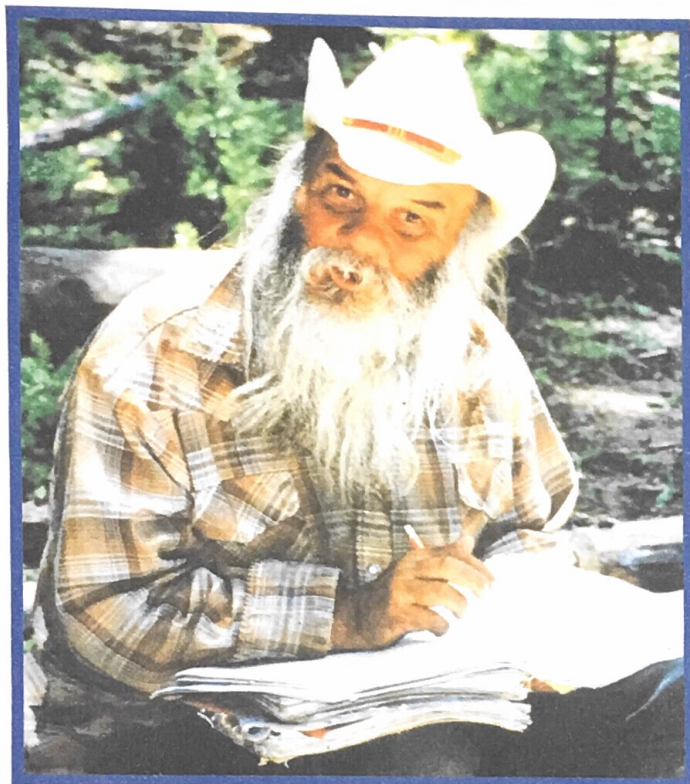


Rainbow Family

Life Stories



by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.

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09.B RUFUS (Little Star)

- interviews done in 1974 (the sober
portion)
and in 1978 (the drunk
portion)

5 pages

[09.B]

RUFUS (Little Star)

[Rufus was born on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. As often happens to Indian children, he was put into a white foster home because of his parents' excessive drinking. He returned to the reservation, where he met one of the few stabilizing influences in his life, a grandfather who was active in the peyote ceremonies of the Native American church.

When he was 17, he joined the Army. Like many Indian youth, he received awards for bravery in Vietnam—but also like many Indian youth, he was demoted and put in military jail for his refusal to submit to his superiors.

When I first met Rufus in Austin in 1971, he was still limping from wounds he got in Vietnam. For a while he went to the University of Texas and was active in the large left wing that flourished around the campus. In the summer of 1972, he went to the Rainbow Gathering in Colorado, but he got no further than the parking lot. The two sections of Rufus's story—sober and drunk—show the striking differences in personality that alcohol can make. The sober portion was taken down in 1974 when Rufus was staying with Charlie Smith, one of the founders of the University of Texas SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) chapter. Rufus was hoping that the Left, which had given him hope, would revive.

The drunk part of the story was done in 1978 in a bar that Rufus owned a few miles west of Austin. By now he showed much less idealism. He was drinking beer very heavily.]

RUFUS (Sober) We Let The Revolution Go Unfinished

I was born in 1951. I'm a Lakota Indian. The white kids were always jumping on me in high school because I wasn't like them. My father taught me, "Don't ever talk to people and you won't get in trouble." And not talking to people got me in more trouble.

I was in high school ROTC for two years. I wish I had learned to shoot love instead of a gun. I wish I had learned how to get to know people.

I went to the University of Texas from 1971 to 1973. I felt like I was in a prison. People treat you like in prison. If you say what you think, you're fucked. There's no way I could change it and people in Austin have grown completely cold. The Yippies and the SMC [Student Mobilization Committee] have died out. Since then, people haven't been mobilized to do anything about public affairs. It even caused the street vendors to be moved off the Drag [Guadalupe Street] to where no one will go out of the way to see what they have.

At the rallies they used to have, people were so full of love. People would hug each other and say, "Hey, brother, you're in this too!" People don't even talk to you when you say, "Hey, brother!" now. They just go on walking. Rent got more expensive. A place I rented in 1973 for \$50 was \$120 by 1974. And people wouldn't let you crash so much any more.

What I was taught at UT don't help me out now. I wish they would have taught me to love people. On the road I learned to get along with people.

I was interested in student government all the time. That was my main interest. The student government didn't just help out students. It helped out the whole city by campaigning for city council members who would be halfway decent for a change. They had a big thing about street vendors. We won that fight on street vending then. I sold flowers and made things with leather. We had an organization. Then a lot of people lost interest in student government overnight - boom! Except for a coalition - SAC - who were still into changing things.

I quit being a vendor. I got burned out on making things. In 1974 I worked for TTP - Texas Temporary - a hiring hall. They

paid you \$18 a day plus \$ for lunch. Usually we worked at a furniture factory - Serta Mattresses. They're very infamous.

The vendors hassled my friends, the street people, because the street people panhandled them and the vendors didn't have the money. The street people were usually sober on the street, panhandling enough to eat and get high, but everybody thought they always panhandled to get high. Vendors always called cops on street people when a fight was happening. People would come up to us and hit us without any reason and called us scum. Some street people could have cleaned up their act and not been so violent. Austin was always a pretty mellow town. I don't believe that fist-fighting is right. Most street people were not violent. They were pacifists. I could have gone and beat up people in revenge, but that would just burn out Austin. It would make people hate street people more.

Up until summer, 1973, cops in Austin were righteous cops. They'd bust people for serious things like riots, never for drunk. They would carry them to Middle Earth, the drug crisis center, to get sober. Then they started busting people for drunk all the time. The street people kind of burned out Austin. There was so many of them. You never seen so many. Austin was a righteous town for panhandling. The street people overdid it. There's no place where they could do it like Austin. Berkeley or Boulder or Tucson would put them in jail. Austin was the only city in the US where it was legal to panhandle in daylight hours.

I went to the Austin City Council every time there was an issue to involve the street scene or the vending scene. Me, personally, I couldn't get much done with the council. It would take a lot more people besides me to do it. Politics used to mean something to me - mayor, governor, president. You know, leaders. Now it means bullshit and lies.

A radical is a person for heavy changes when the people of today who will run the country tomorrow want to get busy today to help the people who are being fucked over.

We let the revolution go unfinished. Everyone became burnt out. We are not doing much of anything any more that is needed to be done. What is happening is that the hippies are turning pigg.

I let society get me down and almost destroy me by my drinking and being pushed around. I'm going to revolt against society and its piggish ways. SDS, Yippies, where are you?

RUFUS (Drunk) I Like a Bit of Rowdiness

I was on the reservation until I was four. I was adopted by a white family in Des Moines, Iowa, and they moved to Berkeley. I went back to Pine Ridge Reservation on my own, just visiting later, seeing some of my kin.

I joined the Army when I was 17, just cause I wanted to. It's something everybody should do. It's an education. The Army can teach you more in one year than college can in five. The Army can teach you about the world. I can handle violence. I like to see a little bit of rowdiness. I get bored when everybody's sitting around mellow all the time. I go to wrestling matches all the time.

I went to OCS [Officers' Candidate School] and got to be a second lieutenant when I was 18. There was a joke in the Army that the highest death rate in Vietnam was second lieutenants. Their own men didn't like them because they was all 90-day wonders. It's enough to make you want to be a private again.

Kenny's one of my good friends - very best friend, I guess. I've known Kenny better than anyone I've known here. We've traveled in freight cars many a time. We traveled in the dirtiest freight car of the lot to Deming, New Mexico. We jumped out at Deming and hitched up to Albuquerque to see this guy who was a pretty good friend of mine then - Muskrat. Kenny used to be called by the name Tripper or Trips - something hippy-dippy

like that. When I met him years later, we ran around for three months and he kept reminding me of this or that we had done and I didn't remember until he mentioned that he used to call himself Trips.

Everybody thinks I'm a rich man now because I own a bar. I'm learning a lot. It's taken me time, but I'm learning how other people feel. I try to snazzy my bar up. If people go for the rustic look, I'll do the rustic look. I moved here to get away from all them city people. I like to see my old friends from Austin, but I don't like seeing a bunch of townies. I like to see the townies spending a bunch of money here, but I don't like to see a hassle—a fight between the townies and the people out here.

I don't touch whiskey any more. I don't even touch a drop of wine. I don't know of anything that's kept me from drinking beer. I haven't smoked pot in about three years. I just don't get high. I smoked some Colombian today and got wiped out.

I don't drink Coors. I didn't want to sell it. I sell it because I lost about eight customers because I didn't sell it. I worked for Coors once. They asked what my name was and I said, "Tino Little Star," and they said, "I'm sorry we can't use you" because I was an Indian. I'd like a BOYCOTT COORS sticker in my window and all that bullshit for the AFL-CIO.

I got the lowest prices for any of my brands of beer of any bar on Lake Austin.

[Rufus no longer has his bar. He's married and moved to Montana and gave up drinking. Then broke up with his wife and moved up to Tucson.]